

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3391

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 1726

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HU, RO

SUBJ: HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA

REF: (A) BUCHAREST 2406, (B) MUNICH 1052

1. EMBASSY FINDS REFTTEL A INFORMATIVE AND BALANCED IN POR-
TRAYING SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA. WE HAVE
NO MAJOR DIFFERENCES WITH EMBASSY BUCHAREST'S ASSESSMENT.

2. WORTH POINTING OUT, HOWEVER, THAT HISTORICAL ANTIPATHY
BETWEEN HUNGARIANS AND ROMANIANS UNLIKELY TO BE OVERCOME IN
ONE, OR EVEN TWO GENERATIONS. RESIDUE OF MUTUAL ILL-WILL,
PLUS SIZE OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY, OBVIOUSLY PRESENTS GREATER
PROBLEMS FOR ROMANIANS THAN FOR AUTHORITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA
AND SLOVAKIA. NATIONALITY POLICY OF AUTHORITIES IN
YUGOSLAVIA, WHERE 600,000 HUNGARIANS IN VOJVODINA HAVE
STILL LIMITED BUT PERHAPS GREATER AUTONOMY THAN IN
ROMANIA, MAKES IT EASIER FOR BELGRADE TO COOPERATE WITH
BUDAPEST IN WORKING OUT ARRANGEMENTS ON TRAVEL AND FAMILY
UNIFICATION. ROMANIAN NATIONALISM (AS SOVIETS CAN ATTEST
TO) IS OBVIOUSLY STRONGER THAN LENINIST PRINCIPLE THAT
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MINORITIES ARE BRIDGE BETWEEN NATIONS.

3. WE HAVE COMPARED NOTES WITH UK DCM (PARA 12, REFTEL A) IN BUDAPEST WHO RECENTLY TOURED AREA WITH HIS BUCHAREST COUNTERPART. HE AGREES SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA, WHILE MODERATELY OPPRESSIVE, IS NO WORSE THAN THAT OF ROMANIAN MAJORITY. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE SEEN EVIDENCE OF SOME DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HUNGARIANS IN GAINING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION OR MANAGERIAL POSITIONS IN FACTORIES AND THINKS THERE MAY BE INFORMAL QUOTA SYSTEM APPLIED TO HUNGARIANS IN THOSE TWO AREAS. ALTHOUGH ROMANIAN POLICY OF GRADUAL ASSIMILATION OF MINORITIES DOES IMPLY CERTAIN DEGREE OF DISCRIMINATION, UK SOURCE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF USE OF FORCE OR COERCION. IN FACT, HE CLAIMED THAT DESPITE ASSIMILATION POLICY, OFFICIAL ROMANIAN FIGURES ON HUNGARIAN POPULATION SHOW STEADY INCREASE.

4. UK DCM SAYS CHURCHES ARE FREER IN ROMANIAN THAN IN HUNGARY AND QUOTED CALVINIST BISHOP IN TRANSYLVANIA AS SAYING THAT "WHATEVER SORT OF FREEDOM THERE IS IN ROMANIA, WE ENJOY IT". EMBASSY PAO, ON TWO OCCASIONS IN PAST 12 MONTHS, NOTICED THAT HUNGARIAN-LANGUAGE CHURCHES IN TRANSYLVANIA WERE FILLED TO CAPACITY. HE DOES NOT, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT CHURCHES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE OFF IN HUNGARY THAN IN ROMANIA.

5. OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUE STATED THAT HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA DOES NOT NECESSARILY WISH TO SEE ITSELF BECOME OBJECT OF INCREASED INTEREST FROM BUDAPEST, MANY FEARING THAT INTEREST FROM HUNGARY PROPER CANNOT HELP, AND MAY EVEN MAKE THEIR PLIGHT WORSE. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT HUNGARIAN MINORITY APPRECIATES ROMANIA'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND REALIZES IT IS BETTER OFF IN ROMANIA THAN IN HUNGARY WHERE THERE ARE LARGE SOVIET OCCUPATIONAL FORCES.

6. RE YEARLY HUNGARIAN MIGRATION FROM ROMANIA TO HUNGARY, WE WOULD TEND TO CREDIT HUNGARIAN DCM'S ESTIMATE RATHER THAN MTI CORRESPONDENT. HUNGARIANS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN STIMULATING MOVEMENT IN THAT DIRECTION BECAUSE THERE IS A SERIOUS HOUSING SHORTAGE HERE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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TO DO SO WOULD BE WEAKENING THEIR LONG RANGE CLAIMS TO TRANSYLVANIA BASED ON POPULATION FIGURES. THUS, GOH CENTERS ITS ATTENTION ON SUSTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY.

7. HUNGARIANS HERE DISCUSS PLIGHT OF THEIR MAGYAR MINORITY IN ROMANIA IN SOMEWHAT EMOTIONAL TERMS. THEIR ATTITUDE ON THIS ISSUE HAS PREVENTED HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS FROM BEING CLOSER THAN THEY ARE. THEY DELIGHT

IN POINTING OUT THAT IN HUNGARY THERE IS GREATER DOMESTIC
FREEDOM AND HIGHER LIVING STANDARDS THAN IN ROMANIA, AND
THAT IT IS EASIER FOR HUNGARIAN CITIZENS TO TRAVEL TO
ROMANIA THAN IT IS FOR ROMANIAN CITIZENS TO TRAVEL TO
HUNGARY. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE PROBABLY ENVIOUS OF ROMANIA'S
OBVIOUSLY MORE INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY THEY ARE PRONE
TO REFER TO IT SCORNFULLY AS "THAT TYPICALLY GYPSY
FOREIGN POLICY". THESE ATTITUDES ON PART OF HUNGARIANS
TO SOME EXTENT MAY SERVE SOVIET INTERESTS IN THAT THEY
HAVE MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR BUDAPEST TO ADOPT HERETICAL
POLICIES OF BUCHAREST. NO SELF-RESPECTING HUNGARIAN
WOULD EVER LIKE TO BE ACCUSED OF FOLLOWING ROMANIAN
EXAMPLE.

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